



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **WEST NILE VIRUS CONTINUES TO BE FOUND IN DEAD BIRDS** ***Red-Shouldered Hawk Found With Virus in Vista***

County Vector Control officials announced today that a dead red-shouldered hawk from Vista has tested positive for West Nile virus, bringing the county's total positive dead birds to six for this year. All of the positive findings are from North County, with the southern-most bird found in Rancho Penasquitos. There have been 85 human cases in California, including two deaths in 2004, but there have been no human cases in San Diego County.

"By reporting dead birds, Vector Control staff can identify hotspots in the county and aggressively treat mosquito breeding sites to kill mosquito larvae before they become biting adults that can spread disease," stated Gary Erbeck, Director of Environmental Health.

Vector Control will continue to pick up and test corvids, including crows, ravens and jays; and raptors, such as hawks, owls, and falcons. The public should report dead birds only if they meet the following criteria: they have been dead for less than 24 hours; do not have a foul odor; are not covered with ants or flies; are not stiff; and if their bodies are intact and have not been hit by a car, shot, or killed by animals. Placing a bag of ice over the bird will help to preserve it until Vector Control staff can collect the specimen for testing. While you cannot get West Nile virus from dead birds, picking up the bird with bare hands is not recommended. Wear disposable gloves if you must handle the bird.

To report dead birds please call the County of San Diego Vector Control at 888-551-INFO.

The public can play an important role in preventing mosquito breeding by inspecting their yards for standing water in old tires, pots and play equipment and dumping it out. Mosquitoes can breed in as little as a teaspoon of water. If residents have concerns with mosquito breeding in their community they should contact Vector Control at 888-551-INFO.

You can protect yourself from the virus by: staying inside at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active; wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors; and by using an insect repellent containing DEET when you must be outdoors. Keep screens on doors and windows and make sure they are in good repair. For more information about the West Nile virus, call the County's West Nile virus information line at 1-888-551-INFO (4636) or visit the official County West Nile virus web site at [www.SDFightTheBite.com](http://www.SDFightTheBite.com).

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